

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Since demands on your time are extraordinary, I will be brief and to the point. I am writing to encourage you to vote affirmatively on SB 185, the bill to abolish the death penalty and replace it with life without parole.

Having spent over 50 years in forensic science as an investigator, researcher, consultant, and professor, even before it was recognized as a specialty area, I have extensive experience in evaluating its efficacy. I have taught sex and homicide crimes to attorneys, health care professionals, local law enforcement, and the F.B.I. I helped pioneer the legal inclusion of bite mark evidence and the establishment of medical examiner systems.

My experience in working with all phases of forensic science provides me with a unique opportunity to inform you of its strengths and weaknesses. Much of the evidence is tainted, some is overlooked, and some is actually falsified. All you need do to recognize its influence is to reflect on the number of cases that are reversed with DNA evidence and those that have been exposed as prosecutorial abuses.

It has always been my philosophy, based on my training and education, that our system is designed to protect the innocent. To convict, sentence, and execute one innocent human being is intolerable. In this day of scientific enlightenment, coupled with financial exigency, I believe our best approach is to abolish the death penalty and replace it my life without parole.

Sincerely,

Ronald M. Gerughty, DDS, PhD
Pathologist, retired
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